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ABSTRACT

Language is a system developed for the purpose of communication. Grammar (structure), which reflects language form, is only one aspect of language; the other two are meaning and function. Failure of form-centered approaches to second language teaching, the audiolingual and cognitive approaches, led to the emergence of the communicative approach in the mid-1970s and neglect of grammar as a valid component of language instruction. Now that the communicative approach has evolved somewhat, another look at the role of grammar in communicative language teaching is appropriate. It is likely that much of what has previously been addressed as sentence-level grammar will in future be reanalyzed and taught in relation to its role in discourse, and therefore as it contributes to communication. While the discourse-based approach may be perceived to be in conflict with the highly social and interactive exercises characteristic of the communicative approach, its real contribution will be to move learners beyond superficial, everyday communication to the expression of experiences, thoughts, and ideas that can only be adequately expressed through extended discourse. As such, this approach emphasizes the use of texts, oral and written, to extend learner awareness of how grammar functions in discourse. (MSE)

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WHAT ROLE FOR GRAMMAR AFTER THE COMMUNICATIVE REVOLUTION?

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WHAT ROLE FOR GRAMMAR AFTER THE COMMUNICATIVE REVOLUTION?

Marianne Celce-Murcia

PRELIMINARIES

Whenever I give a talk involving the term "grammar" to a small group, I like to begin by asking everyone to write down a definition of "grammar" on an index card so that we can compare definitions, and so we can see very clearly that the term "grammar" means different things to different people. A group that I addressed earlier this year came up with five different kinds of definitions:

1. Aesthetic - a grammar can exemplify the best or most elegant way to express an idea or message.
2. Prescriptive - a grammar is rules that show you what is correct (eg, There are two books on the table) and what is incorrect usage (eg, There's two books on the table).
3. Social Etiquette - a grammar decides what is acceptable usage (eg, He isn't...) and what is unacceptable usage (eg, He ain't...).
4. Psycholinguistic - a grammar is the unconscious system of rules in the mind of a native speaker.
5. Descriptive - a grammar describes the rules or the system that a particular speech community follows when it uses language for communication.

From the perspective of descriptive grammar, of course, some of the so-called "incorrect" usages of prescriptive grammar and some of the so-called "unacceptable" usages of social etiquette become "grammatical" if one takes into account situational factors such as register, modality and speech community. In fact, in truly objective and non-judgemental descriptions, even the non-target-like interlanguage of second language learners can be considered grammatical to the extent that it is systematic and describable (Selinker, 1972).

From the perspective of foreign or second language teaching, the fifth and final definition given above--that of grammar as a description--is the one generally accepted and it is the one I shall follow most closely in this talk; furthermore, I would like to limit the scope of the term "grammar" to morphology (grammatical inflections on words) and syntax (word order and function words such as articles and prepositions). The speech community generally selected for descrip-

tion in foreign or second language teaching consists of well educated native speakers. This being the case, some of the other four perspectives on "grammar" can become part of the description at times, since well-educated native speakers make use of several different registers and varieties of English. (I'm leaving aside the issue of differences in geographical dialect, which is yet another source of grammatical variation).

If we accept the premise that language is a system developed for the purposes of communication: grammar (or structure), which reflects the form of language, is only one aspect of language--the other two being meaning and function. Language cannot be used for purposes of effective communication unless all three aspects are present and interacting with each other. In fact, all comprehensive models of communicative competence (see Canale and Swain, 1980, for an overview) include at least these three dimensions of language; they often include some other considerations as well.

Let us now turn our attention to language teaching methodology and the place that grammar has had within the profession during the past 35 years.

METHODOLOGY SINCE 1945

The Audio-lingual approach of the forties and fifties (eg Fries, 1945) and the Cognitive approach of the mid-sixties and early seventies (eg Jakobovits, 1970) were different in that the former was based on structural linguistics and behavioral psychology while the latter was associated with transformational generative grammar and cognitive psychology. However, both of these approaches were preoccupied with sentence-level grammatical structure. In pedagogical applications of both approaches, the structural syllabus was the only known way of organizing a language course and the purpose of second or foreign language instruction was to enable the learner to be able to use the forms of the target language accurately.

The lack of success of these two form-centered approaches in getting learners to communicate effectively in the target language and the growing popularity of socially-motivated models of communicative competence, particularly those proposed by Hymes (1972) and Halliday (1973, 1978) led to the emergence of the communicative approach to language teaching in the mid-seventies.

Wilkins (1976) was one of the first to suggest that a language syllabus should be organized according to meanings (ie, notions) and functions rather than forms (ie, structures). There were even some rather extreme proposals made to the effect that no instruction in grammar--implicit or explicit--was needed, ie, that language, which includes grammar, would emerge as a result of interaction and communication (Hatch, 1978) or that it would emerge as a result of comprehensible input (Krashen, 1981, 1982). The logical outcome of either of

these two points of view was that grammar had become obsolete. There was no need to teach grammar to students and no need for language teachers to spend much time learning about grammar since it had become more important for language teachers to know how to teach interaction and communication or how to make language input comprehensible to the learner.

There were, of course, more balanced views in applied linguistics right from the start of the communicative revolution concerning the continued importance of structure (or form), (see Wilkins, 1976: 66, and Canale and Swain, 1980). However, the language teaching profession, swept off its collective feet by the communicative revolution, often paid little attention to these voices of moderation. Now, however, there is both anecdotal and empirical evidence from second language acquisition research and classroom research (Higgs and Clifford, 1982; Long, 1986) indicating that adolescent and adult learners do not master the grammar of a second language merely through using or understanding the language; and many conservative classroom teachers, teachers who may never have fully accepted the communicative approach, are beginning to preach a back-to-basics sermon, which entails--first and foremost--the gospel of sentence-level grammar.

I saw and heard evidence of this newly rediscovered doctrine at the TESOL convention in San Antonio (7-11 March 1989). Many sentence--level grammar review texts from the fifties and sixties have been republished virtually intact; the only thing new is the cover. The unhappy editor of a publishing house that had developed a very sound contextualized and communicative grammar series told me at TESOL that one of their largest buyers was dropping the communicative series and going back to a sentence-level review because the sentence-level text prepared their students better for the TOEFL examination.

Even teachers who are fully sympathetic with the communicative approach have come to accept, for the most part, the fact that some focus on form--or "grammatical consciousness raising", as Rutherford and Sharwood Smith (1988) call it--is needed. There is, however, a great deal of confusion about how grammar can be successfully integrated into a notional-functional syllabus and implemented within the framework of the communicative approach.

Perhaps now that the communicative approach has reached adolescence (assuming that "birth"--in terms of public history--is approximately 1974 or 1975, which means the approach is about fifteen years old), we can reassess somewhat more objectively the challenges facing those who would like to integrate focus on form with a communicative approach to language teaching.

PREDICTIONS

In order to look ahead to the 1990's and predict how grammar instruction will be integrated with communicative language teaching, I made my own predictions, but I also consulted one of my most trusted colleagues: Dr Elite Olshtain of Tel Aviv University, Israel. We both agree that grammar is an integral part of language teaching and that it is now enjoying a rebirth, in marked contrast to its status ten years ago. We have thought about integrating grammar with communicative language teaching and have come up with slightly different predictions and suggestions, largely, I think, as a result of focusing on different student populations. Dr Olshtain works with teachers of younger, lower proficieny secondary-level EFL students whereas I work with teachers of older second language learners in adult school or university, some of whom have (or need) a high level of proficiency in English.

Dr Olshtain's predictions thus apply well to the foreign language study of younger beginning-level EFL learners in elementary and secondary schools. She feels that for such learners grammar must be presented very differently from the previous sentence-level treatments so that they can develop an understanding of how language works without a lot of drudgery. She gives the following series of activities as an example unit for this population.

First the pupils provide personal information by filling out a simple matrix or grid or by writing lists in response to simple instructions. In one matrix students can list the names of family members and then give everyone's name, relationship to self, age and height. This will allow for practice of comparative and superlative forms in a context completely familiar and meaningful to the learners:

- I am taller than my sister Sarah.
- My grandfather is the oldest in the family.

The pupils will also work in dyads in the classroom completing similar information on a grid about themselves and the other classmate in the pair; each pair will then make comparisons using very concrete and specific information:

$$\left\{\begin{matrix}\text{I am} \\ \text{Ari is}\end{matrix}\right\} \text{ older than } \left\{\begin{matrix}\text{you are} \\ \text{Zev is}\end{matrix}\right\} \text{ but } \left\{\begin{matrix}\text{you are} \\ \text{Zev is}\end{matrix}\right\} \text{ taller than } \left\{\begin{matrix}\text{I am} \\ \text{Ari (is)}\end{matrix}\right\}$$

The following column headings elicit lists which Olshtain asks pupils to generate:

THINGS I LIKE TO DO WHEN I HAVE TIME	THINGS I HAVE TO DO EVERY DAY	THINGS I DO OCCASIONALLY
go to the beach	make my bed	visit my aunt
play football	study	travel to Haifa
	do the dishes	
.	.	.
.	.	.
.	.	.

These lists can then be used for practicing the simple present tense. Again, working in pairs, the pupils will write two sentences, or two short paragraphs, corresponding to each list:

- Every day I make my bed, study, and do the dishes.
- Every day Eli walks his dog and practices the violin.

This gives the learner practice with verbs in the simple present tense--both the uninflected first person singular as well as the inflected third person singular.

As a second step, the pupils will use the information they have generated and practiced during the first step to write a simple letter introducing themselves to a pen-pal in the US, thus incorporating the target structures into a meaningful piece of communication.

In the third step the teacher will present in class data that the students themselves have generated, with the data grouped according to each structure being taught (comparative, superlative, simple present tense). The teacher will get the students to come to some kind of grammatical generalization in their own words about each structure.

In the fourth and final phase, the teacher will give the pupils the formal rule for each structure and let them compare it with the rule they themselves have generated in step three.

Olshtain concluded her comments by stating that with this way of approaching the teaching of grammar within a communicative framework, the learners will need to take risks and to be more responsible for their own learning. And the teachers will need to know the material and the grammar thoroughly, to be flexible in responding to what the learners generate, and to be good classroom managers so that all practice (individual, pair and small group) is carried out efficiently.

My own perspective on the need for--and an approach to--grammar in the post-revolutionary 1990's has evolved from a chapter on text-based approaches to teaching grammar that I wrote for my most recent publication in this area (Celce-Murcia and Hillies, 1988). My prediction is that much of what we now

treat as sentence-level grammar will be reanalyzed and subsequently taught in relation to its role in discourse. It is only through an examination of how grammar operates in discourse--oral and written, using all common genres--that we and our learners, will truly come to understand what the "rules" of grammar are with reference to communication. Let me give you two examples.

Example One

Structural and traditional grammarians have long speculated as to the difference between the past habitual forms ***used to*** and ***would*** in the context of sentences such as the following:

- I (used to/would) go see my grandfather when I had the time.

However, beyond stating that ***used to*** is a more explicit and unambiguous marker of past habit than ***would***, or that ***used to*** more clearly marks some sort of constrast of the past with the present than ***would*** does, not much useful information has been discovered by such paradigmatic and introspective analyses that would clarify for textbooks writers, teachers, or learners exactly what the difference between these two forms is.

One of my UCLA graduate students, Kyung-Hee Suh, has carried out a discourse analysis of past habitual forms in English as her M A thesis research (Suh, 1989). Among the many interesting things that she has discovered is the fact that in discourse ***used to*** typically sets up, or frames, a past habitual narrative episode by expressing the rhetorical equivalent of a topic sentence--whether in speech or writing--and that ***would***, and sometimes the simple past tense or even the past progressive, mark the details that follow and expand on or elaborate the topic. My student has found dozens of naturally occurring examples of this discourse pattern. A few excerpts will suffice:

In Studs Terkel's ***Working*** (1974), which contains a great deal of transcribed spoken narrative, Ms Suh found many episodes like this one:

> The bad thing was they ***used to*** laugh at us, the Anglo kids. They ***would*** laugh because we***'d*** bring tortillas and frijoles to lunch, they ***would*** have their nice little compact lunch boxes with cold milk in their thermos and they***'d*** laugh at us because all we had was dried tortillas. Not only ***would*** they laugh at us but the kids ***would*** pick fights.

Not surprisingly, Ms Suh has also found the same pattern occurring in written narrative. The following example is from J D Salinger's novel ***Catcher in the Rye*** (1951):

When she was a very tiny little kid, I and Allie *used to* take...old Phoebe with us (to the park...especially on Sundays). She*'d* wear white gloves and walk right between us, like a lady and all. And when Allie and I were having some conversation about things in general, old Phoebe*'d* be listening. sometimes you*'d* forget she was around, because she was such a little kid, but she*'d* let you know. She*'d* interrupt you all the time. She*'d* give Allie or I a push or something and say, "Who? Who said that? Bobby or the lady?" and we*'d* tell her who said it, and she*'d* say "Oh," and go right on listening and all. (p. 89)

These and other such texts can obviously function as an important part of a unit on expressing past habit in English. Learners would be exposed to a varied and rich data base, first for reading comprehension and then for analysis. For the analysis phase, they would have to answer questions like these: what is the meaning and function of *used to* in these text? What is the meaning and function of *would*? Do you see any other verb forms being used to express past habit in these text? How are all these forms distributed in the texts in relation to each other? Then learners would be asked to produce--orally and/or in writing--a past habitual narrative by selecting from four or five appropriate topics:

- What I used to do when I was (_____) years old
- What I used to do during my school vacations
- Things my grandmother/grandfather used to do
- Things my best friend and I used to do.

In the course of sharing and rewriting these narratives, students become ever more confident of using the rhetorical strategy that relates the use of *used to* and *would*; their understanding of these forms and related forms, take them well beyond the level of the sentence into the realm of discourse and communication.

Perhaps a second example making quite different use of discourse would be helpful at this point.

Example Two

Quirk and Greenbaum (1973: 147) present and discuss various alternative forms for expressing the generic use of articles with countable nouns, where ("generic reference is used to denote what is normal or typical for members of a class"). They present the following sentences:

- The German is a good musician.
- A German is a good musician.
- The Germans are good musicians.
- Germans are good musicians

and observe that "singular or plural, definite or indefinite can sometimes be used without change in the generic meaning". Several years ago, Susan Stern (1977), one of my graduate students in Applied Linguistics, did some research on these forms because she found the lack of any meaning difference reported in Quirk and Greenbaum and in many other sources to be unsatisfying. She used entries from the 1962 edition of **The Encyclopedia Americana** as her database since an encyclopedia seemed a logical source for finding nouns used in their generic sense. Also, she decided that she needed to look at texts dealing with semantically different kinds of nouns since the possible generic forms that a noun could take seemed to vary with the semantic category of the noun. In other words, while nouns expressing nationality, ethnicity, or some other socio-political distinction could take all four of the generic patterns that Quirk and Greenbaum indicated, other types of nouns denoting plants, animals and inanimate objects such as musical instruments and inventions seemed to be more limited in the range of generic patterns they could take.

Stern selected one or two nouns from each of the semantic subdivisions and analyzed the passages she found for them in the encyclopedia, recording all instances where the noun was found generically. In describing national or socio-political groups, Stern found the ***the +noun + plural*** pattern to be the most frequent form, used typically to describe some physical, tangible characteristic:

Eg, ***The Swedes*** have been less subject to intermixture than many peoples.

In fact this pattern occurred with no other type of noun. In dictionary entries dealing with plants or animals, Stern found the abstract ***the + noun*** pattern to be the dominant one; the entries focused on giving the characteristics of the species:

Eg, ***The rose*** is of great importance to the florist and nursery business.
The tiger attains its full development in India.

The same pattern dominated for inanimate nouns referring to musical instruments and inventions:

Eg, The ultimate step in creating ***the modern piano*** was cross stringing.
Johannes Kepler subsequently developed the theory of the ***the telescope***.

However, for inventions such as the telescope there were almost as many instances of the *zero article + noun + plural* pattern as of the *the + noun* pattern. In all such cases, there was a modifier present, which indicated that the statement was a generalization about a particular subclass rather than the more general class as a whole:

Eg, The mirrors of early *reflecting telescopes* were made of speculum metal 1.

In reading through the encyclopedia entries Stern found only a few instances of the generic *a/an + noun* pattern:

Eg, The very nature of farming requires that *a farmer* have his own home and family.
A wounded tiger has been known to spring on an elephant and to inflict serious wounds on the driver and occupants of the howdah.

Both examples generalize from individual cases; in the first example, *a* means *each* or *any*, whereas in the second example, use of *a* indicates that there are several instances where a tiger has best known to behave this way. Had the author used the generic plural noun phrase *wound tigers* instead of the singular with *a* to make this generalization, the reader might envisage two or more tigers attacking as a group in any given instance, instead of understanding that there were simply several incidents, each involving one tiger. Here the singular interpretation is clearly what the author intended to convey.

I have restated Stern's findings in some detail because I believe that ESL teachers and advanced ESL students, given the appropriate data to analyze, would be able to read texts involving definitions and descriptions--eg, encyclopedia entries or other such texts--and come to basically the same conclusions as Stern did about article usage with generic noun phrases in discourse. I feel that this is a more appropriate way to present this aspect of article usage than is the sentence level paradigm approach adopted in Quirk and Greenbaum (1979) and virtually every other reference on English grammar that one can currently consult.

Again, the reading and analysis will serve as preparation for the writing of a definition-description text by the learners. In fact, I would recommend that two texts be written: one dealing with a social-political group or a nationality so that the *the + noun + plural* pattern can be used; and the other text dealing with a plant, animal or invention, topics which would allow practice of the *the + noun* and the *zero article + noun + plural* generic patterns.

Ultimately, the class should also consider generic noun phrases in everyday conversation since this is the richest source of the *a/an + noun* pattern. the

dictionary entries were simply too formal to give the learner adequate data making any generalizations about this generic pattern.

CONCLUSION

In beginnng to draw my remarks to a close, I want to emphasize that this discourse-based approach to grammar will require that students experience and analyze sufficient relevant data and subsequently apply the generalizations drawn from these data to producing their own texts on topics reflecting their needs or interests. If my predictions are accurate, then language teaching materials, teachers and learners will work primarily with texts--instead of sentences--when they teach/learn grammar, for grammar will ultimately be understood not at the paradigmatic sentence level, but at the level of discourse: what forms mean and how they distribute themselves in relation to similar forms within a particular genre or register or modality which happens to be reflected in a particular text.

This discourse-based approach, which I predict will become more popular in the 1990's, may be perceived, to some extent, to be in conflict with the highly social and interactive activities and exercises characteristic of the communicative approach (pair work, group work, information gap, etc). It would be a mistake to come to this conclusion, for this is not at all what I intend. The proposal I make here is one to supplement the social-interactive work now accomplished successfully in the best of the communicative materials and its purpose is to move learners beyond that level of fairly superficial everyday communication to the expression of experiences, proposals, thoughts, and ideas that can only be adequately expressed in extended discourse. There is, of course, no reason why the comprehension and analysis of example texts as well as the production and subsequent reworking of similar texts by the learners cannot be the source of numerous pair and group activities that make such discovery and learning enjoyable cooperative experiences. This is why I emphasize that increased use of texts--oral and written--to extend and enrich learner awareness of how grammar functions in discourse will supplement and extend rather than replace the current communicative materials.

I'd like to end this paper on a personal note. The prediction I am now making, ie that grammar will be taught and learned through discourse, has taken me back to an intriguing experience that I had many years ago. While in Nigeria from 1964 to 1966 on my first overseas teaching assingment, I met and was able to talk on one occasion with Chinua Achebe, the well-known Nigerian nevelist. Since Achebe controlled the English language brilliantly and most of my university-level students did not, I asked him how he had been able to acquire such perfect English, what he had done that made him different from my students. For the record, I asked him and he told me that until his university studies in

Ibadan, he had never had a native speaker of English as a teacher). Achebe thought about my questions for a while, and then he told me of his early passion for the novels of Charles Dickens. He would beg, borrow, or steal every Dickens novel he could, and when he got hold of a new one, he would completely devour it, virtually memorizing it from beginning to end. Achebe was fascinated not only by the stories Dickens told but by the way in which he told them. Achebe had become, as an adolescent, a very efficient analyzer of Dickens' discourse, and the results were phenomenal.

I'm not suggesting that we can get our students to study texts with Achebe's enthusiasm and skill. Achebe is an exceptional case, a creative genius and a gifted learner. However, on a smaller, more modest scale, and with a more diverse data-base in terms of genre and register, we can teach our students a version of Achebe's "text-based" strategy. In so doing, we will help them acquire grammar through discourse, which is an approach grounded in contextualized language that is thoroughly compatible with teaching language as a system for communication.

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